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AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR OVERSEAS AID

(INCORPORATED IN THE ACT)

Memo to: Neville Ross

Regarding: ICVA mission to East Timor

From: Pat Walsh

Date: 10 September 1988

1. Early this year the ICVA Governing Board endorsed an ACFOA proposal to mount an ICVA mission to East Timor.

2. On 5 May 1988, Tony Kozlowski met with the UN Under-Secretary-General, Rafeeuddin Ahmed, in New York who gave UN Secretariat backing to the proposal 'provided the members of the mission represent apolitical organisations', and undertook to put the proposal to the new Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas.

3. In July Ahmed informed Tony Kozlowski that Alatas had accepted the proposal as outlined in an 'Informal Note' prepared by Ahmed. (Copy attached)

4. Ahmed's 'Note' faithfully reflects the terms of reference and conditions for the visit proposed by ACFOA. (Refer paras 3,4,5)

5. Later in July Tony Kozlowski discussed the proposal in some detail with the Indonesian Ambassador to Geneva and his aides. Tony's report of that meeting is attached.

6. From Tony Kozlowski's report it is clear that the next step is for ICVA to respond to four requests made by Indonesia.

   These are:

   (1) that an official interpreter accompany the mission (in addition to the mission's own interpreter);

   and that ICVA submit to Indonesia

   (2) the curriculum vitaes of the four members of the mission;

   (3) a detailed program for the visit;

   (4) proposed dates for the visit.

7. Re <u>official interpreter</u>

   It is considered that this request should be firmly (albeit diplomatically) opposed on four grounds:

   7.1 Attaching an Indonesian appointed interpreter to the mission would compromise the independence of the mission in the eyes of the Timorese people. The Timorese are profoundly intimidated and have good reason to be sceptical of foreign visits which have

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been systematically manipulated by Indonesia over the years. (See attachments Fixing Foreign Visits and Excerpt from Statement by former civil servant Inacio de Moura). The presence of an Indonesian appointed interpreter (whether that person is Indonesian or East Timorese) would jeopardise the principal humanitarian objectives of the visit which will be devoted in large measure to talking freely and directly to the people about their needs.

The mission must be independent and be seen to be independent and principally concerned with what the people (not the government and military) have to say about their situation and needs.

The request to work independently is a logical and reasonable approach for an NGO mission to adopt.

It should be emphasised, however, that this condition does not rule out meetings with officials or the presence of official interpreters at such meetings.

7.2 The arrangment requested by Indonesia would be an unnecessary duplication of resources.

7.3 The mission has complete confidence in the competence and integrity of its interpreter.

7.4 It is standard procedure for NGOs undertaking development related missions to travel independently of government but still allow for meetings with officials.

8. Alternative proposal re official interpreter

ICVA's firm policy should be that the mission works independently employing its own interpreter brought from outside East Timor.

Should Indonesia, however, resist this policy to the point of denying access to the mission, ICVA might propose as a last resort that a professional interpreter be appointed by the United Nations to service the mission. A UN appointee would be independent of both ICVA and Indonesia.

In view of his positive involvement with the project, Rafeeuddin Ahmed could be approached to support this proposal. This appointee should come from outside East Timor and be proficient in English, Tetum, Portuguese and Indonesian.

9. Local host

The issue of the official interpreter and the importance of ensuring the independence of the mission raises a matter which has not been addressed to date, namely which organisation in East Timor will host the ICVA mission.

It is considered that the Catholic Church in East Timor would be the appropriate body to fulfil this role. The Church is independent and insofar as it enjoys the support of the majority

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of the people, is established in all parts of the territory and manages a range of humanitarian projects, the Church is both well informed on the situation of the people and well situated to handle the organisation of the visit.
The head of the Church is Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo who is based in the capital, Dili.

It is proposed, therefore, that ICVA seeks Indonesia's agreement for Bishop Belo to act formally as the local host to the ICVA mission.

The Church would be requested to fulfil all the usual requirements for a visiting delegation, namely to organise accommodation for the mission, the program, transportation and meetings and where necessary to accompany the mission on visits.

It should be noted that the involvement of local Church officials with the mission may satisfy Indonesia's requirement that an official interpreter accompany the mission. This should not, however, substitute for the mission bringing its own interpreter.

10. Composition of the mission

Consistent with the general categories already proposed to Indonesia by ICVA, the following names are proposed for ICVA's consideration.

10.1 Dr Takami Toshihiro (representing Asian volags)

He is Director of the Asian Rural Institute and Chairperson of the Japanese NGO Centre in Tokyo. His special interest in rural development will serve the mission well in East Timor where some 90% of the people live in villages.

His name has been proposed by Russell Rollason.

Neither Dr Toshihiro nor his organisation have been active on East Timor. He speaks English.

He has not yet been approached to join the mission and would need intensive briefing.

10.2 Hakan Landelius (representing ICVA)

As former Director of Swedish Save the Children Fund he needs no introduction to ICVA.

His name has been proposed by Russell Rollason.

As far as is known, neither he nor his organisation have been active on East Timor.

Thomas Hammarberg, the current Director of SSCF, originally agreed to participate in the project in its previous format of a broader enquiry but admitted he would not be acceptable to Indonesia in view of his past involvement as Secretary-General to Amnesty International.

Hakan Landelius has not yet been approached to join the mission.

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10.3 Asian Church person

Three possibilities are being canvassed:

10.3.1 Fr Luis Hechanova, Filipino Catholic priest, Director of the Redemptorist Order Justice and Peace Office in Rome.

Neither he nor his office have any record of activity on East Timor. He is highly respected as experienced, astute and articulate.

His name was proposed by the (Catholic) Centre for the Progress of Peoples in Hong Kong.

He has not yet been approached.

10.3.2 Martin Lee, Catholic barrister from Hong Kong. He has been very active on human rights aspects of Hong Kong's integration with China. He is highly regarded as perceptive, sensitive and articulate and having a strong commitment to human rights.

His name was proposed by the Centre for the Progress of Peoples in Hong Kong.

He has not yet been approached.

10.3.3 A representative of the Philippines Conference of Major Religious Superiors. Possibilities are being identified in consultation with the secretary of that body, Fr Tom Marti.

10.4 Mission interpreter: Maria do Ceu Lopes da Silva.

She is 31 and a native of East Timor who left there in 1982. She is currently living in Sydney, Australia and is in her third year of University.

She speaks English, Tetum, Portuguese, Indonesian, Spanish and French.

Before leaving East Timor she worked with the Catholic Church and the International Red Cross. She has good relations with the Church and Mario Carrascalao, the Governor of East Timor.

Her departure from East Timor was not 'political' and she has not been active either politically or within the Timorese community since coming to Australia.

She is available to join the mission after 22 November, and obviously has many credentials beyond her interpreting skills to recommend her.

ICVA's reactions to these nominations would be appreciated.

If ICVA is in agreement, ACFOA can sound out those not yet contacted as to their interest and availability and obtain personal details. (Thomas Hammarberg might oblige in respect of Hakan Landelius)

The issuing of formal invitations and the submission of curriculum vitaes to Indonesia will be ICVA's responsibility.

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11. Mission program

The program should provide for a comprehensive assessment of the humanitarian situation and needs of the people with reference to the three categories already submitted.

These are (1) the situation of food, health, education, housing and related factors; (2) the resettlement and transmigration programs, and (3) the activities of the community, Church, NGOs and Government in relation to the above.

This assessment will involve briefings and meetings with the following:

(1) a cross section of the people in representative situations in each major part of the territory;
(2) relevant officials of the Church and aid organisations (including international bodies such as the ICRC and UNICEF);
(3) relevant local and senior officials from government departments and the military, including the Governor.

Time should also be set aside for meetings with relevant NGOs (particularly the ICRC delegate and UNICEF) and Government officials in Jakarta before the visit to East Timor.

With the exception of the Jakarta segment, program details for the period of the visit to East Timor will be organised by the East Timor Church (assuming Indonesia agrees to its role as mission host).

There are three sound reasons why ICVA cannot provide a detailed program in advance as requested by Indonesia.

First, easy two-way communication with East Timor to organise the program is virtually impossible.

Second, the local Church is better placed to organise an effective and well-targeted program than ICVA can from a distance.

Third, it will lessen the chances of government intervention and 'site preparation' if ICVA refrains from signalling its detailed program in advance.

12. Proposed dates

As the selection of mission delegates has not been finalised and further discussions with Indonesia on the basis of this memo are required, it will not be possible for the mission to visit East Timor in October as originally proposed.

It is therefore proposed that the visit take place during the two week period 25 November - 9 December. These dates will need to be negotiated with the mission delegates and should therefore be regarded as provisional.

13. Final comment

It should be borne in mind that the in principle agreement given by the Indonesian Foreign Ministry may not be endorsed by the Indonesian military who have the final say on access to East Timor.

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ACFOA HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE
124 Napier St. Fitzroy, 3065
Australia. Tel: (03) 417-7505

16 NOvember 1988

Luisa Teotonio Pereira
CDPM
Rua Pinheiro Chagas 77, 2est
Lisboa
Portugal

Dear Luisa

Further to my telex re the ICVA mission to East Timor, I am writing to provide you with some background material on the proposal.

Enclosure 1 gives the general context and purpose of the visit (Confidential)

Enclosure 2 provides further detail and raises several matters for negotiation with Indonesia (Confidential)

Please note that until these questions are resolved (namely Church as host and single interpreter) nothing can be decided about dates. So the visit will certainly not take place before Christmas and will most probably not occur until well into the new year, Jakarta permitting.

My reason for contacting you is to ask if you can recommend an anthropologist familiar with East Timor who could join the mission. It would be preferable if he/she had not taken an active political position on the issue. Roque Rodrigues has suggested Luis Tomas, but as I have no knowledge of this person I would appreciate your assessment. If you people feel positive about Luis would you ask him if he's interested and available. If so he could forward us his curriculum vitae and we would write and formally invite him to participate.

Would you kindly emphasise to him that the proposal is totally confidential at this point and that ACFOA's role is also not to be publicised in any way. While ACFOA is doing some of the basic organising the mission should be understood as an ICVA initiative alone.

We hope to finalise the delegation and set a date for the visit before Christmas. ICVA can then continue their negotiations about composition, timing and conditions with Indonesia in the new year. Your earliest response would therefore be appreciated.

I apologise for loading you over-worked people with extra tasks. Timor might not be at the top of the international agenda but it certainly continues to consume a lot of energy for some of us.

Multos abraxos and warm regards to all Pat.

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(1)

ICVA MISSION TO EAST TIMOR

Draft letter to proposed participants

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), of which ACFOA is an executive member, is planning a mission to East Timor later this year to assess the humanitarian needs of the East Timorese people. As the initiator of this proposal I am writing to ask if you would consider joining this mission as one of its four members.

The former Portuguese colony of East Timor was invaded and annexed by Indonesia in 1975, resulting in massive disruption and loss of life. Since then Indonesia has maintained tight control on access making it virtually impossible for independent assessment of the situation, despite repeated international calls for free access.

However in the course of 1988, ICVA, with the support of the United Nations Secretariat in New York, has obtained Indonesia's in principle agreement to visit the territory.

The purpose of the visit would be to ascertain and report on the current humanitarian situation and needs in East Timor. This would involve an assessment of (a) the situation in respect of food, health, education, housing and related factors, (b) the resettlement and transmigration programmes, and (c) the activities of the community, the church, non-governmental organisations and the government in relation to the above.

The conduct of this assessment will involve meetings with the local people, church and NGO officials (including the ICRC and UNICEF both of which have projects in East Timor), and relevant government officials both in East Timor and Jakarta. The priority would be to engage in free and direct consultation with the people.

To ensure the independent and NGO character of the visit, ICVA will request that the Catholic Church in East Timor host the mission and organise its program of activities.

It is proposed that the visit take place during the two week period 25 November - 9 December 1988. The mission will be accompanied by its own interpreter who will be appointed from outside East Timor and will be fluent in English, Tetum (the local language), Portuguese and Indonesian. Comprehensive background material on the situation will be supplied to each mission participant and briefings will be organised in advance of the visit in each participant's country.

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Indonesia has stressed that the mission should be 'politically neutral in character'. Accordingly ICVA has given an undertaking that none of the members of the mission or their agencies will have taken 'a political position on the East Timor question'. It should be noted that because of this stipulation my organisation would not be acceptable to Indonesia as a participant. For this reason, ACFOA's role in facilitating the mission in collaboration with ICVA should be kept confidential.

With these conditions in mind, ICVA has proposed that the mission be composed of a representative from a relevant ICVA member agency, a representative from the Catholic Church in Asia, and a representative of an Asian voluntary agency. The fourth member would be the mission interpreter.

I am fully aware of the many calls on your time and resources and would not wish to underestimate the extra demands associated with a visit of this kind to a highly politicised situation. However I believe your experience, skills and concern for people recommend you strongly for this undertaking and I therefore urge you to seriously consider our invitation.

An independent and comprehensive assessment of the humanitarian situation in East Timor is long overdue and will be of great benefit to the Timorese people.

Thankyou for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely.